

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 865

By Bryson

A RESOLUTION to recognize Leon Brown Pullen, Sergeant-at-Arms for the Senate of the Tennessee General Assembly.

WHEREAS, the members of the Tennessee General Assembly have been fortunate over the years to enjoy the contributions of a number of distinguished Tennesseans who have served as Sergeants-at-Arms for the Chambers of this legislative body; some of these citizens brought as assets to that office the varied experiences of their lives and former careers; and

WHEREAS, one such distinguished citizen of this State is Mr. Leon Brown Pullen of Nashville, who served with great dedication, dignity and enthusiasm as a Senate Sergeant-at-Arms from 2003-2004 during the 103rd General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, we are acutely aware that our friend has been in an intense three-year battle with serious illness, contending with three kinds of cancer and undergoing surgery and extensive chemotherapy; throughout his struggle he has maintained his cheerful, optimistic outlook, displaying an indomitable will to survive, never complaining, reaching out to those experiencing similar ordeals with encouraging words, uplifting their hearts and spirits; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Pullen is uniquely equipped by virtue of his strength of character and optimistic outlook on life to deal with the tribulations often dealt out by life; from the very beginning, he has committed himself to living life to the fullest, extracting the greatest pleasure from relationships with family, friends, and people in general, and approaching others with friendship, affection and respect; and

WHEREAS, born June 2, 1936, in Columbia, Maury County, Tennessee to the late Gladstone and Alice Rebecca Pierson Pullen, Leon Pullen lost his mother two days after his birth; he was taken to live in Nashville by his aunt, Minnie Worley, who kept him until age twelve, at which time he returned to live with his father and step-mother in a lovely antebellum

plantation home then known locally as the "old Granberry place" but better known today as historic "Rattle and Snap"; and

WHEREAS, young Leon attended Eakin Elementary School in Nashville and Haylong High School in Mt. Pleasant; he drank deeply from the region's rich history from an early age, and once was lowered by means of a rope down into one of the mansion's huge Doric columns to retrieve some Civil War canteens presumably hidden there by the family during the Civil War; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Pullen has been an avid reader and authority on the Civil War, being especially knowledgeable about Confederate Generals Patrick Cleburne and Nathan Bedford Forrest, and having personally traversed many battlefields across the nation, studying the tactics and maneuvers employed there; the depth of his expertise was acknowledged when he was chosen to deliver the Keynote Address at Founder's Day observances in Cleburne, Texas; and

WHEREAS, Leon Pullen has collected every print or oil canvas he could obtain by renowned Civil War artist John Paul Strain, a personal friend; many of these works are artist proofs; and

WHEREAS, after graduating from high school, Mr. Pullen served in the United States Navy for four years during the 1950s aboard heavy cruisers and aircraft carriers, including the U.S.S. Shangri-La; though never displaying a pessimistic nature, he did take the precaution of having a Confederate Flag and the legend "Tenn" tattooed on his left arm, in case the ship sank and his body was recovered without other identification; and

WHEREAS, Leon Pullen has lived in a number of locations in Middle Tennessee, including Santa Fe in Maury County, Franklin, and Lawrenceburg. He worked for Monsanto Chemicals for 40 years in Columbia, earning the respect of his peers and superiors alike for the exemplary quality of his work; known by the nickname "Gabby," he would talk to everyone, delighted in trading pocket knives, coins or almost any item, and was the plant cut-up and tease; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Pullen was part of a hardworking and record-setting workforce at Monsanto whose members worked long hours to accomplish plant goals; his personal traits of

radiating his pleasure in seeing his fellow workers, his "can do" attitude, and his ever present smile brightened everyone's day and served as a definite morale enhancement; and

WHEREAS, Leon Pullen's penchant for "horse trading" in collectibles, such as knives, guns, watches, coins, and jewelry, among other items, caused him to never miss a flea market or gun show; he collected Smith and Wesson guns, founded and, from 1975-83, served on the Board of Directors of the Smith and Wesson Collectors' Association. He also collects Belgium-made Browning 22 automatic rifles, is an expert on the Colt 45 Government Model automatic pistol and is a life-long member of the National Rifle Association; and

WHEREAS, when Monsanto Chemical Company closed their phosphate operation in Maury County in 1986, Mr. Pullen transferred to Trenton, Michigan and commuted home to Nashville every two weeks to see to his collectibles and maintain contact with family and friends; in December of 1991 he retired and came home to Nashville; and

WHEREAS, in 1996 Leon Pullen joined the West Nashville Lodge No. 2221 of the Loyal Order of Moose, quickly becoming active, serving one year on the Board of Directors and in addition chairing several committees; taking a keen interest in the Moose Legion, he received its prestigious Moose Legion of Honor for his tireless efforts on behalf of its various activities and charities; and

WHEREAS, also in 1996 Mr. Pullen attained the Second Degree of the Moose Legion and signed up in excess of 60 members into the Second Degree; he organized the organization's fun sessions and took great personal interest in the organization's charities, notably at Moose Hart in Moose City, Illinois where the organization provides a home environment for orphans and operates an entire school system from nursery to high school for them; and

WHEREAS, Leon Pullen is a consistent champion of the downtrodden, outcast and homeless of society, always offering them financial aid, encouraging words and a warm smile. A cheerful, optimistic person, Mr. Pullen has never met a person he did not like; he treats the poor and downtrodden as warmly and respectfully as he does the rich and powerful, both of whom he has entertained; and

WHEREAS, for the past twelve years it has been Mr. Pullen's custom to leave his condominium at 5:30 a.m. every morning to join a group of special friends for breakfast at Mrs. Winner's on Charlotte Avenue to exchange views on local and national politics, tell stories and swap experiences and jokes; Mr. Pullen has an opinion on every subject as diverse and numerous as the conversations he shares and is eager to express it to anyone willing to listen; and

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly best know Leon Pullen as a man of modest and humble manner who never advertised the breadth and depth of his knowledge in many varied areas. He has served for two years as Sergeant-at-Arms with dedication, loyalty, integrity, dependability and trustworthiness; it is a given that his word is his bond and one always knows where one stands with him; and

WHEREAS, perhaps not surprisingly, Mr. Pullen found humor in the ways of the legislature, but at the same time always held public officials in the highest esteem; he has stated proudly that his job as Senate Sergeant-at-Arms was the best job he had ever had; and

WHEREAS, this General Assembly wishes to seize this opportunity to specially recognize our friend Leon Pullen; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we pause in our deliberations to thank Mr. Leon Brown Pullen for his outstanding service as a Senate Sergeant-at-Arms and to the State of Tennessee.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we salute Mr. Pullen for his many talents and accomplishments as a student of history and life, and for enriching the lives of all who know him. Mr. Pullen has established an honorable legacy, which will be remembered and appreciated.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.